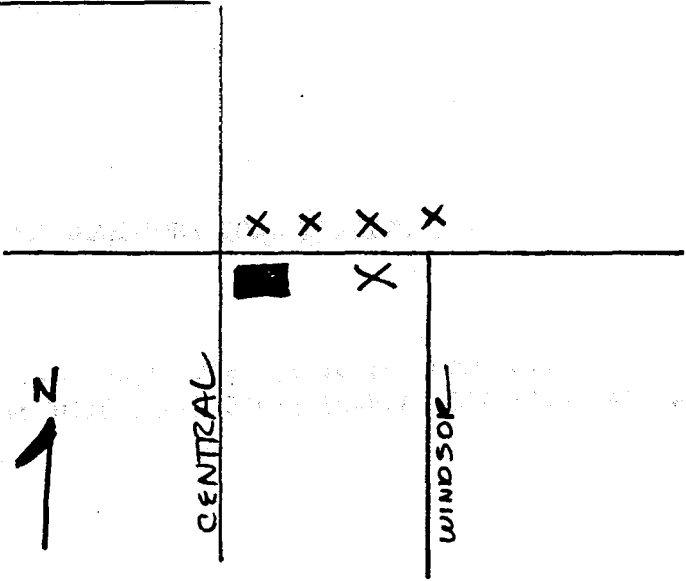




between intersections of  
intersection(s). F-2A-110  
Indicate north



UTM REFERENCE \_\_\_\_\_  
USGS QUADRANGLE \_\_\_\_\_  
SCALE \_\_\_\_\_

AREA C FORM NO. 228

Location Acton  
Address 578-590 Massachusetts Avenue  
Historic Name Charles Robinson and  
Anderson Rowell (1850s), C.H. Mead (1880s)  
: Present commercial  
Original commercial  
DESCRIPTION  
Date 1850s  
Source maps/Fletcher/Nylander  
Style Greek Revival  
Architect none  
Exterior Wall Fabric clapboards  
Outbuildings none

Major Alterations (with dates) \_\_\_\_\_  
modernization of storefronts (20th century)  
Condition Good

Moved No Date \_\_\_\_\_

Acres less than one acre

Setting At the corner of Massachusetts  
Avenue and Central street, this commercial  
complex is a visual reference to 19th  
century mercantile life in West Acton.

Recorded by B. Nylander/Schuler and Johnson  
Organization Acton Historical Commission  
Date June 1988/ March 1990

**NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)**

**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE** Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

SEE INVENTORY CONTINUATION FORM

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE** Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

SEE INVENTORY CONTINUATION FORM

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

Atlases/Maps: 1856; 1871; 1875; 1889

Directories: 1883; 1902

Fletcher, Acton in History; Phalen, History of the Town of Acton

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:  ACTON	Form No:  C-228
Property Name: 578-590 Massachusetts	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

578-590 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE / ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

The complex of commercial structures at 578-590 Massachusetts Avenue is composed of three 2 1/2 story gable-front clapboard-clad blocks linked by one story storefronts. Constructed in the Greek Revival style, the three gable-front buildings retain much of their original appearance; the storefronts have experienced a number of changes and additions.

#590 Massachusetts Avenue, the oldest of the three gable-front blocks, is two wide bays across and five bays deep. The gable front has an open wide raking cornice, wide fascia board, gable returns and narrow corner boards. There is a single 6/6 window in the gable peak and two 6/6 on the second floor; all are in applied enframements with slightly projecting molded lintels. The west facade has a wide frieze board and five 6/6 second story windows. First story fenestration has been replaced with two narrow banded windows and a modern three-part window. There is a recessed entrance marked by a plain opening at the back of the west facade.

Across the front of #590, a series of storefronts composed of large glass windows and recessed entrances projects from the first story and links the block with the one at #582. The two gable-front blocks at #582 and #578, are joined by storefronts and by a recessed two story clapboard section lined with a wide frieze, 2 6/6 windows and one small multi-pane window up near the eave. The two gable fronts have enclosed pediments each comprised of a molded cornice and wide frieze and framed by wide corner posts. Each has a 6/6 window in the gable peak and three on the second story level. A glass panel and steel enframed storefront joins #578 to #580; a Colonial Revival style wood frame storefront with glass panels, a recessed entry, and a multi-pane transom projects from #582. The east facade of #578 has a small 6/6 window in the second story and a 1 1/2 story inverted shed roof addition, two bays deep on the first floor and one on the second. Behind this is a partially visible two story rear addition with three 6/6 windows on the second floor and two on the first floor.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:

ACTON

Form No:

C-228

Property Name: 578-590 Massachusetts

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

578-590 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE / HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION:

Currently linked by a series of storefronts, the three buildings at 578-590 Massachusetts Avenue have individual histories. Together the buildings have played a significant role in the commercial life of West Acton from the 1850s to the present.

590 Massachusetts Avenue: This gable front block (west end of trio) was built circa 1856 (Walling 1856, Fletcher) by Charles Robinson. The building replaced an earlier (1837) store that was erected by Bradley Stone. The first store was moved to the rear of the present building and later demolished. Charles Robinson played a major role in the physical and civic development of West Acton during the latter half of the 19th century. In addition to this store, he built a combined residential and commercial building (#536 Mass Ave), a hall for the Universalist Society (demolished), and a cider manufactory (demolished). He lived at #544 Massachusetts Avenue (see form).

After Mr. Robinson's tenure, maps and atlases identify the building's owners as N.E. and D.C. Culter (1871), S.M. Osgood and E. Cutler (1875), and L. Blanchard (1889). Town histories describe a succession of 19th century stores run, in turn, by Sidney and Henry Bull, Burbeck and Tenney (both pre 1845), Mr. Hastings, Nelson Conant (1870s), and Charles H. Mead (1880's to early 1920's). In a 1902 advertisement, Mr. Mead's general store is described as selling groceries, hardware, boots, shoes and general merchandise. A post office, run by Mr. Mead, was located in the store until it was moved to the Mead Block (#568-570 Mass Ave) in 1922. Mr. Mead lived at 616 Massachusetts Ave (see form).

578 and 582 Massachusetts Avenue: The east and central blocks in the trio were built circa 1850 (Walling, 1856) by Henderson Rowell. Mr. Rowell ran a tin shop in the central block until his death in 1860. The properties were owned by Mrs. Rowell and Mrs. Cutler in the 1860's and 1870s (Walling, 1871/Beers, 1875). By 1883, the central block (#582) was occupied by Lorenzo Holt (1848-1892) who ran a tin shop (selling stoves, tin ware, and pumps) throughout the 1880's. John R. Houghton owned a meat market located in the basement level below the tin shop. He operated the meat market in the 1880s and 1890s. Mr. Houghton lived at 249 Central Street (see form). The east block (#578) was owned by Charles Holton by 1883. He ran a barbershop there until at least the early 1900's.

In the early 1920's A.M. Hederstadt purchased the two block section from Frank Knowlton and Arthur Blanchard, remodeled the buildings and expanded the number of stores from two to five. Mr. Hederstadt lived at 249 Central Street (see form).

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:

ACTON

Form No:

C-228

Property Name: 578-590 Massachusetts

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

## HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION (cont):

Begun with the arrival of the railroad in 1845, the commercial development of West Acton village was closely associated with the prosperity of the surrounding apple industry and the growth of local manufacturing. During the latter half of the 19th century West Acton industries included a grist mill, cider mills, produce marketing, tub and pail manufacturing, cigar making, overall manufacturing and other enterprises. Before the railroad the "village" at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue (Harvard Turnpike, 1799), Arlington Street (1735) and Central Street (1766) was a sparsely settled outpost known as the "west part of town."



Staple to Inventory form at bottom